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ABSTRACT

This report describes some of the ways in which Head Start agencies are helping to set parents on the path to self-sufficiency. The report is intended to illustrate the variety of initiatives that are underway and to highlight the important work all Head Start agencies are doing to support parents as they move from welfare to work. The descriptions are based on informal telephone interviews with selected Head Start agencies, which indicated that Head Start agencies are undertaking a wide range of activities to help parents enter the work force, including educating parents about the new welfare law; offering adults education, computer training, pre-employment training, job shadowing and internships; providing job placement services and support groups; and even helping parents obtain small business loans. The report details the following types of initiatives: (1) "Helping Parents Get Started through Adult Education"; (2) "Helping Parents Progress to Internships and Job Shadowing"; (3) "Offering Peer Support and Intensive Help for Hard-to-Serve Families"; (4) "Working with Private Partners To Help Parents Find and Keep Jobs"; (5) "Helping Parents through Loan Programs"; (6) "Building Community Collaborations"; (7) "Collaborating at the State Level"; and (8) "Offering Extended-Day Services to Working Families." A list of contacts of Head Start Programs featured concludes the report. (Author/SD)

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Head Start

Helping Families Move From Welfare to Work

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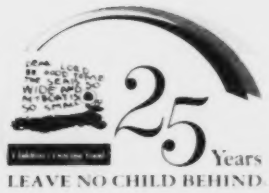
Head Start

Helping Families Move From Welfare to Work

Belva Finlay
with
Helen Blank and Nicole Oxendine Poersch

May 1998



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About This Report

To learn more about what Head Start programs are doing to assist parents in meeting the requirements of the new welfare law, the Child Care and Development Division of the Children's Defense Fund conducted informal telephone interviews with selected Head Start agencies during the summer and fall of 1997. This report is based on those informal conversations.

We found that Head Start agencies are undertaking a wide range of activities to help parents enter the work force, including educating parents about the new welfare law; offering adult education, computer training, pre-employment training, job shadowing and internships; providing job placement services and support groups; and even helping parents obtain small business loans.

To make it possible for parents to take advantage of these opportunities and join the work force, many Head Start agencies have expanded their daily schedules. They are offering child care before and after Head Start sessions and also offering extended-day and odd-hour child care, often in collaboration with child care and preschool agencies.

In fact, in almost all their new endeavors, Head Start agencies are working with others – state and local agencies, schools, private businesses, and private nonprofit agencies – to deliver a broader range of employment-related services than Head Start alone could offer. Often, Head Start agencies have been leaders in their communities, bringing local groups together to explore new and better ways of helping parents find and keep jobs.

This report describes some of the ways in which Head Start agencies are helping to set parents on the path to self-sufficiency. It is intended to illustrate the variety of initiatives that are underway, not to offer a comprehensive review. There are hundreds of Head Start agencies engaged in similar efforts that we were unable to interview, and scores we interviewed that we do not have space to mention here. Yet this brief report is intended to highlight the important work all Head Start agencies are doing to support parents as they move from welfare to work.

"Just as a river broadens as it flows along, our vision has continued to expand," says Head Start Director Lois Sexton, reflecting on the changes in Head Start since its inception in 1965. Sexton was referring specifically to the **Macon Program for Progress Head Start** in Macon County, N.C. But her comment applies equally well to Head Start programs across the country as they have adapted to meet the changing needs of low-income children and their families over the past three decades.

From its beginning, Head Start has been much more than a preschool program. In addition to giving children a good start educationally, Head Start has offered its students health services and nutritious meals and has actively involved parents in its classrooms and policy councils. Head Start also helps parents cope with such difficulties as poverty, substance abuse, homelessness, and family violence.

As more and more families face such problems, Head Start programs are strengthening their family support and social services components. Starting in the early 1990s, many Head Start programs began offering parents new education and job preparation opportunities. Now, with the implementation of the 1996 welfare law requiring parents to make a speedy transition from welfare to work, Head Start agencies are once again expanding their visions of how they can be of assistance to families as they struggle to become self-sufficient.

Given the demands of the new welfare law, Lynda Dyckinson, director of **C.H.I.L.D., Inc. Head Start** in Warwick, R.I., says, "If self-sufficiency isn't the central theme in what we do, we'll be doing families a disservice."

Assisting parents in making the transition from welfare to work is a role for which Head Start is uniquely qualified. Respecting parents and empowering them to take control of their lives has always been a critical piece of Head Start's effort to help children succeed. As a result, parents are especially receptive to opportunities offered through Head Start. The caring support they receive through daily contact with Head Start staff reassures them that Head Start is a safe place to take risks and try new things.

Director Marvin Hogan at **Friends of Children of Mississippi Head Start** in Jackson says a former Head Start parent told him that she had tried other job readiness programs, but Head Start's was the only one that worked for her. "You didn't force me," she explained to Hogan. "All the other programs tried to make me do something I didn't want to do." Basically, said the mother, she trusted Head Start.

Nonetheless, many Head Start directors we interviewed say they are sobered by the challenges they face in helping parents prepare to meet the requirements of the new welfare law. One of those challenges is simply getting parents to understand how the 1996 law will change their lives. Too many parents either do not understand the time limits on benefits or do not believe the time limits will affect them, report Head Start staff. "Parents are confused about welfare changes," says Head Start Parent Involvement Coordinator Sheila St. Amand in Harrisburg, Pa. "They get a lot of conflicting messages and sometimes even some wrong information."

Consequently, in most Head Start programs, family support workers have spent time learning about the new law and are using meetings, brochures, and individual conversations to help parents understand what it means for them. Even so, says Dyckinson, "I see a lot of head-in-the-sand behavior on the part of parents concerning the coming changes." Dickey agrees that even though parent advocates are working hard to convince families that the benefits clock is ticking, it is hard for parents to believe that the state "will actually pull the rug out from under them."

Helping Parents Get Started Through Adult Education

Since Head Start's early years, program staff have encouraged parents to move ahead in their own lives by getting involved in such activities as volunteering in Head Start classrooms, offices, and kitchens; studying for their general equivalency diplomas (GEDs) if they lack high school diplomas; learning English if they are recent immigrants; or preparing for Head Start employment. Those efforts have brought results, reflected by the fact that about 30 percent of Head Start staff nationwide are current or former Head Start parents.

In recent years, Head Start agencies have built on this foundation to create even more education and job-related opportunities for parents. Some agencies, for example, have brought GED and other adult education courses to the Head Start sites themselves. Dyckinson of **C.H.I.L.D., Inc. Head Start** in Rhode Island says that parents have not always followed through when they were referred to other agencies in the community, partly because they could not solve transportation and child care problems. So **C.H.I.L.D., Inc.** hired a GED instructor, began offering classes for parents while Head Start was in session, and arranged for the agency's fleet of 20 buses to provide transportation. As a result, says Dyckinson, many more parents began completing their GED requirements.

Marvin Hogan of **Friends of Children of Mississippi Head Start** says he brought GED classes on site because he found that parents often were intimidated when he sent them to the local community college for the classes. "We got the college to bring the course to us. Then, once parents get familiar with the college staff, they're eager to go to the campus."

On-Site Education and Training Centers

Concerned Parents for Head Start, a Head Start grantee in Paterson, N.J., has gone into on-site adult education in a significant way since it purchased a former nursing home over a year ago, says Executive Director Cecile Dickey. With 14 classrooms, office space, and a central kitchen, the facility is large enough to accommodate adult education classes, computer labs, and other training programs, as well as several Head Start classrooms.

Dickey says she wanted to bring English as a Second Language (ESL), adult literacy, and GED classes on site because she was not entirely satisfied with the result when parents enrolled in community programs. "I lost track of what the parents were doing, and I had some questions about quality," she explains. Now she is collaborating with the local school board and the New Jersey Workfare program to offer adult education and structured volunteer activities not only to Head Start parents, but to other recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), who are also fulfilling their alternative work assignments. One result: more than 40 parents and staff members obtained their food handlers' licenses last year after working in the Head Start kitchen.

In the future, Dickey hopes to turn a former hair salon in the facility into a beauty school that prepares parents for careers in cosmetology, and to create a pottery studio where parents can make pottery to sell.

Off-Site Training Programs

The **Macon Program for Progress Head Start** in North Carolina is another agency that recently opened a new education and training site – the New Horizons Parent and Child Center – located next door to a new apartment complex for low-income families. Head Start staff took special training in adult education through the local community college and from external consultants to equip themselves to provide training and education at the center. Adult literacy courses, ESL classes, GED courses, adult development classes, and computer training are all offered, both during the day and in the evening. In the state-of-the-art New Horizons computer lab, parents can earn up to four college credit hours for on-site computer classes in word processing, computer graphics, video editing, and the Internet. The computer courses are taught by a former Head Start parent.

New Horizons is fostering literacy by helping parents develop their storytelling and reading skills through a program developed by MOTHEREAD, Inc., a North Carolina nonprofit organization. In seminar-style classes, parents explore themes and interpretations of children's books, which they then take home to read to their children. Parents also learn to write and tape-record their own stories, drawing on their personal experience and imagination. These stories are published in the center's own magazine, *Voices from the Mountains*.

Parent Michelle Williams wrote that she has been able to go back to school at the New Horizons Center while her 16-month-old daughter goes to the child care program run by Head Start. "I have been doing great and will be ready to take my GED. I am real excited about it because I have tried several times in the past and never succeeded. The people here have been especially helpful to me and have kept me steered toward my goal. If not for the programs here at the center, I might have given up again."

Family Literacy Coordinator Marti Culpepper says parents are responding enthusiastically to all the educational opportunities at New Horizons. "Our classroom is a learning community," she says. "We have created a safe environment where risk-taking and making mistakes are expected as natural parts of the process."

New Horizons staff help parents who have passed their GED exams apply to the local community college, fill out financial aid forms, and arrange for placement tests on campus. Director Sexton says these efforts are paying off. Last academic year, 13 mothers

who graduated from the New Horizons GED program were enrolled in college courses, and the agency provided transportation to the college and child care for their children while they were in class.

Helping Parents Progress to Internships and Job Shadowing

The career training that many Head Start agencies have added to their adult education programs often represents an expansion of their long-established parent volunteer activities and efforts to train parents for Head Start employment. **C.H.I.L.D., Inc. Head Start** in Rhode Island, for example, has transformed its earlier volunteer activities into a job shadowing program that offers up to 20 hours of work-readiness training, then rotates participants through such Head Start jobs as teacher aide, cook aide, and social service aide. "We have clear expectations, and parents who do a good job get a letter of recommendation to show to prospective employers," says Director Dyckinson. **C.H.I.L.D., Inc.** hires about six graduates of the program each year, and others have found employment in the community.

The **Head Start Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County** in Las Vegas is another agency that developed a broader job training program from its 10-year effort to prepare parents to work in Head Start classrooms. The older program, which has trained a total of about 400 parents, has been so successful that fully 60 percent of the agency's classroom staff are former Head Start parents.

With welfare reform, the agency developed the Parent Development Program to expand into other training areas. These include food handling (the program prepares 2,000 meals each day), building maintenance, and office work. Each Head Start department wishing to participate in the training program developed its own training curriculum. The courses, which will be offered four times a year, run 10 weeks to four months. The first class numbered 23 parents, and Head Start expects to train about 100 parents each year.

Participating parents receive one week of classroom instruction before beginning on-the-job training at Head Start sites. Trainees are evaluated every three weeks on such things as punctuality, dress, effort, and attitude. Former Director Jean Childs says:

> We spend a lot of time on attitude, on how to keep a job. We tell them, 'Don't demand things. Don't tell your supervisor you can't take the shift he or she wants you to take.' And we emphasize to the parents that the supervisor can tell you what to do. It's all about attitude, but not everybody makes it over that hump. We had one parent drop out because she thought getting here at 8 a.m. was too early.

Helping parents understand what it means to be involved in the world of work is a big part of the Parent Employment Readiness Training (PERT), developed by Sylvia

Huntley of Bowling Green State University for the **Toledo-Lucas County Head Start**, in Ohio. Growing out of the agency's existing activities to prepare Head Start parents to work in the classroom, the 10-week PERT program now offers training for a commercial driver's license (the agency runs a fleet of 60 buses and a garage that employs five mechanics), foodservice work, custodial work, and office work, as well as classroom assisting. Director Jerome Lee says he is considering adding a training track for security work and plans to ask the company that provides security for the Head Start agency to take on some training responsibilities.

PERT includes classroom activities (communication, skill-building, resumé preparation, conflict resolution training, and Red Cross training, for example) and two internship experiences. The entire course is treated as employment, and parents are dropped if they miss three sessions. Lee explains:

> After the first internship, we bring them back into the classroom and talk about what happened. It's a real employment situation where they have to deal with supervisors and make choices about how to behave and respond, and that's where the classes on conflict management are helpful. They also have to learn about scheduling and time management. We do some coaching; then we put them out there for the second internship. They are better workers when they get out there.

Like almost every Head Start agency we contacted, **Toledo-Lucas County Head Start** includes computer training in its mix of education and training activities. Lee expresses the concern of many Head Start directors when he notes that low-income people tend to be "left out of technology." To provide computer training for parents and staff, Lee has set up two computer labs and hired a staff person to conduct computer classes every day. So far, about 300 parents and agency staff have been trained. Soon the labs will be linked to the Internet.

Lee says that parents who complete PERT often tell him, "My self-image was low, but PERT helped me raise my self-confidence. Now I understand that I can go out and do this."

Journal-Keeping

In Chicago, the **Ounce of Prevention Fund Head Start** has developed an "employability" training program called Career Paths for Parents (CPP). In addition to offering job shadowing in the areas of family support services, classroom activities, and office work, the CPP curriculum emphasizes activities that build self-esteem and important workplace skills such as verbal and written communication and networking.

When parents begin the training program, they create a personal inventory by listing their skills and work histories. They also write a paragraph on what they would like to accomplish and what they see as barriers to realizing their goals. During the training they keep a daily journal. "You should see their faces when they go back and look at their personal inventory at the end of the training," says Parent Involvement Coordinator Johnnye Bound. "They've accomplished so much, and they're so proud."

Former Head Start parent and volunteer Angela Rogers has been employed by **Ounce of Prevention Fund Head Start** as an office aide since completing the CPP program. Despite her initial reluctance to return to a school setting, she says, she decided to participate in the training program to complete her GED and find a better job than the one she had at a local gas station. Now that she has a GED and office experience, she plans to attend a local community college to begin work toward a four-year degree in business administration. "I'm not sure I could have done it without Head Start," says Rogers. "Until I started coming to Head Start, I didn't know what resources were available to me, and I didn't have anyone to tell me."

As for the CPP program, Rogers found journal writing was a good way to keep focused on her progress. "It was a chance to look back every day and see what steps I had taken," she says. Joining others in a small group was also helpful. "Hearing about their dreams and goals and their determination was inspiring," says Rogers. "I knew I wasn't alone."

Recently, CPP's Bound started working with a job development specialist to find employment opportunities for participants. Of the 15 parents enrolled in CPP in the fall of 1996, 11 completed the program, five are working in the private sector (including one as a bank teller and another for United Parcel Service), five are working at **Ounce of Prevention Fund Head Start**, and one is a full-time college student. The most popular job track is the classroom track, but CPP graduates also are working at the post office, in food-service, and in customer service. One has completed a bachelor's in computer science. "Most of them get entry-level jobs," says Bound, "but CPP is getting them out of the house and into the work force."

Career Exploration Lab

Alachua County Head Start in Gainesville, Fla., is experimenting with a novel way of introducing Head Start mothers to occupations they might not otherwise consider. In conjunction with its "employability" class, the agency has set up a Career Exploration Lab consisting of a number of booths, purchased from a private vendor, which introduce the Head Start parents to various occupations. To find out what is involved in becoming a plumber, for example, or an electrician, or a mail worker, parents visit the appropriate booth, listen to a cassette tape, then try their hands at using the tools and equipment associated with the occupation – perhaps sorting mail under timed conditions or making a flower arrangement. Those who want to know more about a particular job can work at their own pace through part or all of a prepared curriculum presented through a manual and audio tapes. After that, a parent might enroll in a formal training program at a community college.

Thus far, the lab has motivated a number of parents to find work in the fields introduced by the modules, says Williams. Several women are working toward becoming certified nursing or teaching assistants, one is considering upholstery school, and several have found employment with florists. Yet the career lab has not been as compelling to parents as the staff had anticipated. "We have to work to get them to approach the modules," says Education Coordinator Audrey Williams, "and some parents have difficulty reading the manuals." In general, the women are more likely to explore the modules in groups than individually.

Head Start staff also had hoped the modules would interest women in nontraditional occupations that pay better than "women's work," but that has been a tough sell, says Williams. "Parents who use the lab are generally interested in the occupations geared more toward women, such as medical assisting." Williams says she is looking for women in nontraditional occupations who would be willing to come to the class and talk about their careers, as a way of encouraging Head Start parents to expand their thinking about career choices.

Offering Peer Support and Intensive Help for Hard-to-Serve Families

One characteristic of Head Start programs has always been their sensitivity to the social and emotional needs of parents. Head Start staffs include family support workers, whose sole job it is to assist and encourage parents as they attempt to take control of their lives and strengthen their families. In addition, Head Start's adult education and training classes are typically small – about five to 15 parents – to ensure individual attention as well as interaction among participants. Parents say that sharing experiences with others in similar situations reinforces their commitment to change and helps them stay focused on accomplishing their goals.

Five years ago, **Capital Area Head Start** in Harrisburg, Pa., created Success Against All Odds (SAO) to provide general peer support and employment/education assistance to parents wishing to change their lives. In developing SAO, the agency was guided in part by the work of Virginia Schein, author of *Working from the Margins: Voices of Mothers in Poverty*, who maintains that families must have support services and "opportunities for help and healing," as well as economic opportunities, to move out of poverty.

Sheila St. Amand, Head Start parent involvement coordinator, says SAO has given parents the support to get through hard times and move on with their lives. Two SAO groups – one in Harrisburg and one in a nearby rural area – meet once a month. Between meetings, St. Amand stays in contact with group members by phone to help with problems and pass along information on training and job opportunities. There is no time limit on participation; one mother who is working on a four-year college degree has been attending since the group started. St. Amand says:

> We don't always know what happens with parents after they stop coming. Just recently I ran into a mother who came for about a month. She told the group she didn't think she had what it takes to get her GED, although other parents assured her that they had done it and she could too. When I saw her again, she had her GED and a good job, and she said she owed everything to the group. She had just needed someone to encourage her and get her started.

Hard-to-Serve Families

Peer mentoring may be one effective tool to help hard-to-serve families move closer to self-sufficiency, says Kim Young-Kent, director of **Tri-County Head Start** in Waterloo, Iowa. These families, especially, are on her mind these days because two years of welfare reform in Iowa has begun to affect them. About one-third of families formerly on the welfare rolls have moved off welfare, she says, and another third will be successful with some help and a little more time. Young-Kent explains:

> But the final third are a different story. They are in critical trouble. These are the families struggling with difficulties such as mental and physical problems or drug problems. They have strong feelings of hopelessness, and they have little sense of tomorrow or what it might bring.

For them, says Young-Kent, joining the work force is not a realistic option in the near future. "It's a big accomplishment just to get their Head Start child to the bus stop four out of five mornings a week or to schedule and keep an appointment for a physical exam for a child entering school."

Young-Kent agrees with the **Tri-County Head Start** Board that Head Start must find a way to serve the neediest of families, but she has no illusions about what that will mean. "We'll have to invest more resources, lower our caseloads, do more staff development, partner with other community resources, and work harder on case management," she says. To start with, she is proposing that her agency, the Department of Human Services, and the local community action agency work together to create a peer mentoring program for hard-to-serve families.

"We've had good results in Head Start when former parents become staff members," she says. "Parents respond well. It's like neighbors helping neighbors." Now she hopes that parents who have successfully made the transition from welfare to work – including former Head Start parents – can help families in greatest need make some progress on changing their lives. Young-Kent envisions Head Start recruiting mentors and matching them with families, while other agencies take responsibility for training the mentors.

Pathways

A nonprofit employment program that has a wealth of experience helping hard-to-serve families move from welfare to work is **Project Match** in Chicago. After years of providing job counseling and related services to welfare recipients, including parents at the Holy Family Head Start program, it became clear to **Project Match** Director Toby Herr that for most women leaving welfare is not a simple single event but an uneven, nonlinear process characterized by false starts, setbacks, and incremental gains over a considerable period of time.

It also became clear, says Herr, that both school and paid work represent too big a first step for some parents who have never been in the work force. These parents may face challenges such as repeated domestic violence, substance abuse, and very limited education. They may need to start at the bottom rung of the employment ladder, simply getting involved in some outside activities and getting places on time.

For example, at the Holy Family Head Start employment program run by **Project Match,** a parent was first asked to work on such activities as getting her child to Head Start on time, attending a tenants' meetings in her building, and doing some unscheduled volunteering at Head Start. The next rung generally involved committing in advance to regular, scheduled volunteer activities. Gradually parents moved up the ladder of increasingly work-like volunteer activities with specified time commitments, until they built up skills and habits that prepared them for seeking a first job.

Herr has used these lower rung, pre-employment activities to create a work preparation tool, called Pathways, that encourages parents to work toward ultimate employment by taking one small achievable step after another. Participants meet in a group once a week to discuss their individual goals and plan the steps they must take to reach them. Each participant keeps a diary in which she writes down the things she does during the month that move her closer to her goals. At the end of the month, each participant gets a computer printout based on her diary, showing what she has achieved that month.

Herr initially created Pathways for welfare departments to use as a mandatory program for hard-to-serve clients. However, she is now helping **Baltimore City Head Start** in Maryland adapt the approach for use with Head Start parents. Herr says she is pleased to help Head Start use Pathways because she believes the diaries can be a tool to help family service workers implement Head Start's family partnership agreements. Herr explains:

> My worry is that the agreements might just be put in a file and not implemented. With the diaries, Head Start programs can make sure no family is forgotten. Even if a parent isn't ready to keep the diary herself, the family service worker can keep it up to date. In that way, it's also an accountability tool for workers. It helps make sure that specific things happen for each family each month.

According to Becki Sander, **Baltimore City Head Start** family and community partnership specialist, five Head Start programs are using Pathways in various ways. Two delegate agencies have grants from the state to run mandatory welfare-to-work programs, and participation in Pathways is mandatory for welfare-to-work participants. Two other Head Start delegate agencies are using the entire Pathways approach with all interested parents, and one other program is using Pathways' monthly diaries.

Head Start agency staff who are using the full Pathways approach with interested parents presented the ladder concept during their initial home visits with families. They showed each parent a representation of a ladder, with its categories of experience (self-development, family-focused activities, community activities, job search, and employment) and asked what kinds of activities she had already participated in. Sander says, "The workers loved it because it changed the focus of the interview from 'what do you need' to 'what have you already done.' It was a more strength-based conversation."

After three months, parents participating in Pathways seem engaged and committed, says Sander. "They like it that the meetings are structured around the diaries because it keeps them focused." Another benefit of the group, Sander says, is that "it takes the Head Start staff out of the 'expert' role," since group members can help one another. One mother, for

example, said she was having trouble meeting her goal of reading to her daughter before bedtime because her daughter was not interested. The group suggested the woman and her daughter make a book together, and it worked wonderfully, says Sander. The mother and child continued making books, and the daughter now loves both books and reading.

Often a parent may identify the large goal of finding a job, says Sander, "but then you have to help her peel back the layers" before she can get started. One parent, for example, said she wanted to work in child care. As she talked, however, it came out that she could not move forward because she did not have a GED, says Sander. She lacked a GED because she was unable to pass the essay portion of the test. One of her first goals, then, was to learn how to write an essay. Other parents, says Sander, are held back because they need a driver's license, so a first goal for them might be to send away for the driver's manual.

Already there have been successes, says Sander. One woman, disabled from liver disease, could not hold down a full-time job but still wanted some kind of employment. At the first group meeting, she contributed the door prize – a candy house she had made – so the group members began encouraging her to think about using her baking and candy-making skills. One group member helped her produce a flier, which was distributed in an office building. "At the next group meeting," says Sander, "the woman reported that she had been working two hours a day filling orders that came as a result of the fliers."

Sander believes Pathways is helpful because the principles are common sense. She says, "Each person takes small achievable steps that are based on strength and initiated by the person herself. These are really life-management skills that all of us can use."

At the same time, she says, participants benefit from the support that group members can give one another. After three meetings, the group began to gel, says Sander, and the women noticed the change. Sander says one member told her she would not have joined a "touchy-feely" group, yet she enjoys the camaraderie that is developing spontaneously as the group members work together on their diaries.

Working With Private Partners to Help Parents Find and Keep Jobs

Partnering With Employment Agencies

The **Capital Area Head Start** in Harrisburg, Pa., found that it needed to join forces with a specialized employment agency to help some parents stay in the work force. Using a foundation grant, **Capital Area Head Start** is collaborating with a vocational rehabilitation service, the Gateway Employment Agency, to offer intensive employment-related support to parents who need it.

For parents participating in JETS (Jobs, Employment, Training, and Support), Head Start provides job readiness help along with its traditional health, counseling, and family support services. When parents are ready to venture into the work force, they go to work for six weeks at a local Hilton Hotel that has contracted with Gateway to employ a certain number of workers supplied by the employment agency. During the six-week employment period, Head Start helps parents with child care and transportation, and a Gateway supervisor is at the work site to help with job-related issues, such as how to get along with a supervisor. "Our support means that the workers are less likely to be fired," says St. Amand, "so it's a safe way for them to learn what it means to be employed."

At the next stage, participants are assigned to a Gateway job coach, who helps parents figure out what kind of permanent job they want. The coach then finds an appropriate placement and helps the parent through the application and interview process. When a parent is hired, the coach goes to the job site to help her get started, then gradually offers less and less assistance. According to St. Amand, Gateway developed this model from one it uses to help mentally challenged individuals find and keep jobs.

The four participants in the first JETS class, which started in June 1997, were very enthusiastic, says St. Amand. "They couldn't believe someone would actually go to the job site to help them figure out what to do."

C.H.I.L.D., Inc. in Warwick, R.I., also has turned to a specialized employment agency to help it move parents into the work force. Using a Head Start grant, **C.H.I.L.D., Inc.** is collaborating with the national nonprofit organization SER: Jobs for Progress, Inc., which specializes in employment for Hispanics. In addition to offering an extensive curriculum that includes skill and aptitude assessment and pre-employment skill development, SER also works directly with employers to place clients, says **C.H.I.L.D., Inc.'s** Dyckinson. For its part, "SER was excited to partner with Head Start," she says, "because the biggest challenges their clients usually face are child care and transportation – things that Head Start will help with."

When the initiative is launched in the fall of 1998, a SER counselor will be located at a Head Start site, and all Head Start-eligible parents will be eligible to participate. "Our goal," says Dyckinson, "is to place 36 parents in jobs – about 10 percent of our Head Start families. I hope the state will look at what we do and decide to replicate it in other Head Start programs in the state."

Using a Nonprofit's Video-Based Curriculum

In New York state, six Head Start agencies are helping parents get ready for work by using a special video-based job counseling program developed by the nonprofit Institute for Life Coping Skills, Inc., located at Teachers College, Columbia University. According to Executive Director Barry Semple, the Adkins Life Skills/Career Counseling System helps participants make informed career choices based on aptitude and interest. Parents begin the 20- to 30-hour course by completing units on such topics as "Exploring Who I Am and Where I Want to Go," "Exploring the World of Work," and "Making Good Career Decisions."

In later stages, participants discuss finding job information and contacting employers, practice interviewing skills (including such simple skills as shaking hands), and learn about strategies for keeping a job. The curriculum uses video vignettes dramatizing workplace situations to help participants identify problems, explore their own reactions, and learn about alternative responses.

Head Start staff receive three days of initial training to become certified Life Skills Educators, and institute staff are available to Head Start programs to help them implement the program successfully. Ruth Wagner, assistant director of **Children's Aid Society Head Start** in New York City, which started its third Life Skills session in December 1997, says the self-discovery aspects of the Adkins curriculum seem especially helpful to parents. "Parents went in without a clue about what they wanted to do, and by the end they knew. It fits so well into the Head Start philosophy of empowering parents and moving them along."

Former Head Start parent Rosa Rodriguez says the course changed her life. "Before, I didn't think there was anything for me except to take care of my children. Then the Adkins program made me think about what I wanted to do for my future and for my children's future. I found out I wanted to be a teacher, not just be in the house."

After completing the course, Rodriguez was hired by **Children's Aid Society Head Start** as a teacher's assistant. "I'm very proud of it," says Rodriguez, who plans to take college classes in early childhood education so she can become a classroom teacher. She could not have accomplished this without the Adkins course, she says, partly because she used to be so shy she would not talk in a group. "They made me speak in front of everybody in the class," Rodriguez recalls, "and I found out I could do it."

One of the best rewards for her effort has been her three sons' new respect, says Rodriguez. "They're so proud their mother is a teacher."

Helping Parents Through Loan Programs

In Las Vegas, the **Head Start Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County** has put together a combination training and loan program to help 10 Head Start parents become family child care providers. Because Las Vegas is a federal enterprise community, federal funds are available to the agency to hire Head Start parents to receive a year of on-the-job training in its Head Start/child care programs. Head Start trainers are adjunct faculty at the local community college, so participating parents receive college credit toward a Child Development Associate (CDA) degree.

In addition, the agency is arranging for low-interest loans of up to $5,000 to be made available to help trainees set up their homes to meet state licensing requirements. The training and loan program, which started in May 1997, also is helping two participants who are not homeowners to apply for first-time home-buyer loans. "The goal," says former Director Childs, "is to help parents earn a living and at the same time increase licensed child care slots in the enterprise community for other working parents."

Several years ago, **Friends of Children of Mississippi** worked with the federal Small Business Administration to develop a micro-loan project that provides up to $25,000 per loan to help low-income women and minorities start, expand, or improve their own businesses. Since the project began, 15 individuals have received loans, averaging about $7,000, to start such businesses as hair salons and restaurants, and services such as child care, lawn care, and commercial cleaning. Only 1 percent of the borrowers have defaulted on their loans, according to **Friends of Children of Mississippi** accounting and grants manager, Brenetta Walker. One lawn care service currently employs 19 people and had six-figure earnings in 1996. With the introduction of TANF, says Director Hogan, the micro-loan project began to target current and former Head Start parents more directly, emphasizing the goal of self-employment rather than business creation and expansion. Parents are showing increased interest, and loan applications from several Head Start parents are currently being processed.

Building Community Collaborations

A number of Head Start programs we interviewed are working simultaneously with a variety of community groups and agencies to assist parents. Developing the initial relationships with other agencies has not always been easy, according to several Head Start directors, but the effort usually pays off. Director Hogan of **Friends of Children of Mississippi** says:

> At first, there was a problem with others guarding their turf. We had to reassure them that we didn't want to duplicate or replicate what they were doing, so we developed a proactive strategy for jump starting community involvement. A part of that effort is to bring together people from the educational system, the judicial branch, law enforcement, male involvement groups, youth services, and other human services organizations and get them talking about how to do a better job of working together to serve families.

When each participant knows the others and what they are doing, Head Start steps back, says Hogan. "Then our job is to teach families about community resources and how to access them." Hogan continues:

> Our Self-Sufficiency and Empowerment project concentrates on ending poverty rather than just removing persons from unemployment and welfare. It has encouraged 61 parents to return to school, promoted the creation of 106 businesses, and assisted in the creation, securing, or upgrading of 170 jobs.

Hogan is especially proud of his agency's collaboration with local employment services, which now often turn directly to **Friends of Children of Mississippi** when they have job openings to fill. "They know we prepare parents for successful employment," says Hogan.

Breaking Down Turf Barriers

Cecile Dickey of **Concerned Parents for Head Start** in Paterson, N.J., says she encountered a variation of turfism when she started looking for partners for her expanded adult school in Head Start's newly purchased building: "They didn't take Head Start seriously as a job development agency," says Dickey.

Linda Faulkner, social services coordinator at **Toledo-Lucas County Head Start**, says her agency also encountered turfism but managed to overcome it with hard work. Now, she says, Head Start and the JOBS office in the Department of Human Services (DHS) have a particularly good relationship. In the JOBS office, a Head Start–JOBS facilitator talks with every parent of a Head Start-eligible child, so Head Start can be made a part of the parent's work plan. The counselor explains the program and the child care services that can be "wrapped around" Head Start for parents who need full-day child care. About 300 children have entered Head Start though this path, says Faulkner. In addition, Head Start keeps a certain number of slots available for parents in the JOBS program who need immediate transitional services. Parents also can choose to do their 20 hours of required work experience at Head Start.

The collaboration works well, Faulkner says, because both agencies know they benefit from the other's efforts and because Head Start works hard at keeping the lines of communication open with all of its community partners. "Every three months," says Faulkner, "we sit down with our partners, including DHS, and talk about where we've been, where we're going, and what needs changing."

In Cincinnati, **Hamilton County Educational Service Center Head Start** (which includes Head Start, the Hamilton County and Cincinnati public schools, and the Hamilton County Community Action Agency) has teamed up with the Department of Human Services and other agencies to create three Family Resource Centers offering a wide range of services to low-income families. **Hamilton County Head Start's** Executive Director Jack Collopy explains:

> For 32 years we were a preschool program. That isn't enough anymore. Training, transportation, day care, and jobs are the key things parents need, so in 1994 we developed a strategic plan to do more. We're breaking down barriers and working together with other agencies very effectively. If we don't understand collaboration, we might as well close up shop right now.

Under one roof, the resource centers offer Head Start programs, child care and infant toddler programs for young mothers; health, nutrition, and mental health services; adult education and GED preparation; and work experience and training programs, including a program operated by the University of Cincinnati for parents working toward a CDA degree.

Making Neighborhood Connections

In another successful and wide-ranging collaboration, the **City of Phoenix Head Start** has teamed up with the city's housing department, the local high school district, two community colleges, the state's child care administration, and other businesses and community organizations to provide educational opportunities and skills training to the many Spanish-speaking residents and neighbors of the city's five public housing areas. Called Unidos, the program is located in space the city made available in public housing projects. Unidos offers ESL classes for non-English speakers, as well as GED, adult education, and computer training (on city-donated computers) for participants with adequate English. In the fall of 1997, Unidos had 70 enrollees.

"Parents help recruit for Unidos among their neighbors," says Sandi Vasquez, who created and coordinates Unidos. "And when someone is missing from class, another parent goes to knock on her door and bring her. We all help each other. Unidos is a neighborhood thing."

"It's neat to see the impact on parents," Vasquez continues. "It allows them to see how they can grow. Parents come in to talk about jobs, and they tell me what they want to know more about. I help them make the connections." At present, Vasquez is talking to two financial institutions in Phoenix about hiring Unidos participants and is negotiating with an employment service to open an employment center at the main Unidos site.

Meanwhile, six former Unidos parents have received scholarships to one of the community colleges that is a Unidos partner, and 15 Unidos participants are enrolled in computer classes at the college. The college sends staff to Unidos to help parents fill out applications and complete aptitude testing. Parents who take computer classes at the Unidos site also receive college credit.

Head Start parents not ready to enter the work force are invited to participate in **City of Phoenix Head Start's** First Steps program, which refers them to GED courses in the community and prepares them to be volunteers in Head Start classrooms. Parents with a diploma or GED may enroll in Substitute Institute, which trains parents to become Head Start substitute teachers during an eight-week training period that includes on-the-job experience. Graduates work as paid substitutes in Head Start and other early childhood programs in the city, some full time.

The agency also collaborates with the Department of Environmental Services to offer two-hour workshops to qualify Head Start parents to become food handlers. "Employers are impressed that they have their food handler's card when they apply for a job," says Head Start nutrition consultant Amy Sullivan. "It's a great way for parents to get in the door."

Collaborating at the State Level

While many Head Start agencies have collaborated successfully in their own communities to help parents move from welfare to work, in some states Head Start is involved in state-level collaborations.

Massachusetts' Forums

The **Massachusetts Head Start–State Collaboration Project** is leading one such interagency effort. In the spring of 1997, the Head Start-state collaboration project – together with the Administration for Children and Families, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Transitional Assistance, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, the Department of Revenue, the Department of Social Services, and the Office of Child Care Services – held five welfare reform forums in various locations around the state. Titled "Supporting the Transition to Work: A Community's Responsibility," the forums were designed to promote discussion about what Massachusetts welfare reform means for individuals, organizations, and communities; explore how community partners in the child care arena can support the "work first" message and assist in moving recipients from welfare to work; and develop plans for getting the word out to all community partners.

Community teams consisting of Head Start/child care providers, parents, and community representatives attended the forums, which attracted more than 500 participants. At each forum, the staff from the forums' sponsoring agencies explained the welfare law and reviewed the state and federal resources available to help parents during the transition to work.

But at the heart of each meeting, says Dee Bertozzi, the collaboration project director, were small group discussions during which each community team developed an action plan using techniques they believed would best support families in moving from welfare to work. "We concentrated on immediate simple things," Bertozzi says. "The idea was, you don't have to wait until you have funding for a big project. Start now doing small things." Among the activities the teams came up with were the following:

- Develop a "wall of fame" at each program site, displaying photos of parents who find jobs and/or their job descriptions.
- As a part of daily conversation, ask parents how their job search is going.
- Create a list of "10 most wanted jobs" and information on how to get them.
- Provide bulletin board space for job advertisements and used car ads.
- Invite local employers to child care center to meet job seekers.
- Foster opportunities for job seekers to learn skills such as resumé writing and budgeting.
- Create a "chat room" area where parents can share job-related information.

"Many of the ideas were simple and easy to perform yet crucial in supporting parents in making an attitudinal shift," says Bertozzi. Each forum ended with the participants listing the most valuable ideas they learned during the day. These included:

- The welfare clock is ticking; stress time limits at every opportunity.
- Collaboration at the local level is important.
- Refer to welfare recipients as job-seekers.
- Stop stereotyping welfare recipients.
- Child support is important to self-sufficiency.
- Focus on strengths and brag about parents' successes.
- Networking is important.

The community teams were then charged with returning to their communities and implementing their action plans.

The Massachusetts Head Start–State Collaboration Project planned to hold a second round of statewide meetings in the spring of 1998 to find out what steps the community teams have taken and with what results. "We want to know what issues surfaced, and what additional supports, training, and/or information the teams and their community need to implement their plans," says Bertozzi.

Washington's Partnership

In 1995, federal, state, and local agencies in the state of Washington dealing with early childhood education, child care, and welfare formed the Washington Partnership to promote the economic independence and productivity of families whose children participate in either Head Start or the state preschool program (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, or ECEAP). Terry Liddell, the **Washington Head Start–State Collaboration Project** director, says the partnership members realized that Head Start and ECEAP's close relationships with families puts them in a strong position to help parents succeed in leaving welfare for work. To maximize the support that Head Start and ECEAP can offer parents during this transition, their family service workers and WorkFirst caseworkers (the state's TANF program is called WorkFirst) had to become familiar with each other's programs and coordinate their work with parents.

In 1997, the partnership became involved in a pilot effort started by **Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) Head Start** in the suburban and rural areas of King and Pierce counties in the Puget Sound area. Selected WorkFirst staff were trained by Head Start to understand the Head Start and ECEAP programs and become familiar with how parents participate. Head Start and ECEAP family service workers learned how the WorkFirst program operates. "The process of building understanding was slow," says Liddell, "with Head Start staff sometimes seeing the WorkFirst staff as ogres" who push families too far, too fast.

Rick Krauss, the WorkFirst coordinator for King County, agrees that the early training sessions were sometimes strained, "but we're well beyond that now," he says. Head Start and ECEAP staff often attend unit meetings at local welfare offices (called

Community Support Offices, or CSOs), and awareness is building on both sides. "Head Start and ECEAP family service workers are consistent in relaying the WorkFirst message," says Krauss, "and they are helping parents succeed."

After the training, one caseworker in each WorkFirst office was designated as the Head Start/ECEAP contact. "The contacts advocate for and smooth the process for Head Start and ECEAP parents," says Liddell. If a parent has difficulties with child care or her work plan, for example, the parent can go to her Head Start or ECEAP family service worker, who then talks with the CSO contact to see how the problem can be solved. To simplify procedures for parents, the partnership agreed that families may use the same self-sufficiency plan to meet both WorkFirst and Head Start requirements, although that innovation has yet to be implemented, according to Krauss.

So far, the collaborative approach seems helpful for parents, says Krauss. "These families are getting a whole other level of case management – more outreach, more help for the whole family. It's a critical partnership. We see the success on a case-by-case basis, even though we don't yet have data."

Liddell says the partnership plans to have the pilot project evaluated next year and to extend it to more counties if the results are positive. If this collaboration proves to be successful in getting parents into the work force, the partnership may broaden its efforts to include health and education services as well. At present, in addition to **PSESD Head Start**, the partnership includes staff from the Region X offices of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Head Start, child care, and welfare) and from the state departments of Social and Health Services (WorkFirst and child care subsidies), Employment Security (job training), and Community, Trade, and Economic Development (state preschool).

Meanwhile, says **PSESD Head Start** Director John Bancroft, Head Start is continuing its other efforts to help parents prepare for the work force. Recently the agency requested support from Microsoft to set up a technology center to teach computer and office skills. **PSESD Head Start** has also hired several former Head Start parents who were active in its policy council to be employment and training advocates. "They are dynamite," says Bancroft. "As a result of their own experiences, they are much more on top of things than the rest of us. They can see the red flags and help parents respond in the right way."

PSESD Head Start staff are currently determining whether Head Start should modify its work readiness classes and unpaid work experience program to make them fit the requirements of the new welfare law. For the past two years, **PSESD Head Start** has used a combination of Head Start and state funds to prepare parents to become peer health educators, child care providers, literacy advocates, bus drivers, interpreters, and foodservice workers. About 200 parents a year participate in the training, and many are subsequently hired by Head Start and other private and public employers. However, TANF's new work requirements "threw a monkey wrench" into those activities, says Bancroft. "Hopefully, there will still be some opportunities for TANF parents to participate."

Alaska's Initiative

Alaska is another state where Head Start and the TANF agency are collaborating to help parents enter the work force. "As we thought about how we could help parents now that they have to be in training or work, we began to look for places where our work and the state TANF program crossed and we could help each other," says Marilyn Webb, program coordinator for **Alaska Head Start** in the Department of Community and Regional Affairs.

"Head Start came to the Division of Public Assistance with the idea of collaborating, and we were happy to see them," says Sherrie Goll, Alaska Child Care and Development Block Grant coordinator in the Department of Health and Social Services' Division of Public Assistance. "You start looking at common goals," says Webb, "and the rest falls into place."

The result is a statewide initiative in which Head Start programs will train interested parents to become Head Start and child care workers. This effort may expand employment opportunities for parents receiving assistance under the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP) while, at the same time, providing a greater supply of safe child care for families. ATAP will prescreen potential trainees to make sure they meet the basic Head Start requirements and will fund many of the costs associated with the training, including medical screenings, background checks, transportation and child care subsidies, and post-employment services. The state jobs program also will assist with some training.

The initiative was set to start in one urban area, Anchorage, in the 1997–1998 school year and then expand to other areas once a good model is developed, says Webb. The training will be particularly important in rural areas, say Webb and Goll, where it will open up new employment opportunities. Head Start is one of the main employers in most rural communities, along with the school and the store.

As part of the initiative, ATAP and Head Start also will coordinate their requirements for families' self-sufficiency plans, so each family will need only one plan. The Head Start technical assistance center may train both Head Start and ATAP staff in self-sufficiency planning. If all goes well, says Goll, the state and Head Start will collaborate to provide job readiness training, life skills training, and parenting education as well. The collaboration will make it easier for parents to attend classes and participate in training, says Goll, because Head Start and ATAP will be able to coordinate such activities.

"We're excited," says Goll. "It's a totally win–win situation." Both she and Webb believe that an additional positive outcome of the initiative will be greater appreciation of the importance of better training for Head Start and child care workers and good-quality child care and early childhood education programs for children. "We don't talk enough about that," says Webb, "but now there will be new forums for talking about quality services."

Offering Extended-Day Services to Working Families

In Head Start's early years, when mothers typically did not work outside the home, part-day, part-year programs met most families' needs. As more and more mothers began to enter the work force, however, the need for high-quality, full-day programs for Head Start students began to grow. In recent years, federal Head Start expansion grants have enabled many grantees to offer some extended-day, full-year programs, often in collaboration with local child care providers. In addition, Head Start programs have used Child Care and Development Block Grant funds to extend their hours. Now, with TANF's new work requirements, more families than ever will need full-day, full-year services, and since many entry-level jobs require shift work, many families will need odd-hour care. Consequently, Head Start programs throughout the country are looking for ways to offer more families full-day and odd-hour services.

Parent and Child Head Start in San Antonio has been providing extended-day and odd-hour care for many years through both its "flip-flop" model and its home child care program, which enables children to receive the Head Start curriculum and comprehensive services at 200 family child care home sites.

Under the flip-flop model, Head Start collaborates with about half of San Antonio's 18 school districts and several Bexar County school districts to give preschoolers a half-day of Head Start and a half-day of the state preschool program, usually at the same school building. At some locations, Head Start also has room to serve younger siblings of children using the flip-flop services. The school districts give Head Start space at various schools, while Head Start administers the program and collaborates with the school districts on staff training and special student activities, according to Blanche Russ-Glover, chief executive officer for **Parent and Child.**

Head Start centers at the schools open at 7 a.m. for families who must drop off their children early and are open until 5:30 p.m. for all participating children. Some children attend Head Start in the morning and switch to a preschool classroom in the afternoon; others do the reverse. The school districts provide transportation for participating children who do not have access to both programs at the same location. Adelina Fritz, **Parent and Child Head Start** director, explains:

> At first I thought it would be hard to do the flip-flop because we were coming into the schools' territory. But much to my surprise, it went very smoothly and has gone smoothly everywhere we've established it. I think that's because of the great need for full-day programs and because of what Head Start has to offer. Nobody would want to turn that down.

The wonderful thing about the model, says Fritz, is that the children get a twofold benefit. "They get what Head Start has to offer, plus what the preschool program has to offer."

Head Start–Child Care Partnerships

In Ohio, which dedicates more state money to supplement federal Head Start funds than any other state, many Head Start agencies have forged Head Start–child care partnerships to offer full-day and odd-hour programs for children of working parents.

In the Cincinnati area, the **Hamilton County Educational Services Center Head Start**, for example, has formed partnerships with eight private child care centers to offer full-day services, composed of a Head Start program and "wraparound" child care. One center even operates a 24-hour program. The centers provide the sites and the staff, while Head Start supplies the training and Head Start's comprehensive services.

The agency also runs full-day, full-year Head Start programs at two Family Resource Centers and brings Head Start services into 28 family child care homes, each of which serves three or four Head Start-eligible children.

Toledo-Lucas County Head Start also is working with child care programs to offer extended-day and odd-hour care to families who need it. During the 1996–1997 school year, Head Start and the Toledo Day Nursery teamed up to offer four-year-olds a Head Start program from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and wraparound care until midnight. During this school year, Head Start is collaborating with two additional child care programs to serve families that need evening care for their infants and toddlers as well as their four-year-olds. Head Start provides transportation from the Head Start site to the child care centers.

In addition, the agency has formed a partnership with three YMCA child care programs located in buildings that also house Head Start programs. Children have only to walk up or down the stairs to move from one program to the other.

Since 1991, **City of Phoenix Head Start** has collaborated with the Murphy School District and the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Child Care Administration to provide families with extended-day services. The grantee's new expansion programs will offer extended-day care to all parents needing the service.

City of Phoenix Head Start also is working with the Child Care Administration and the Arizona Child Care Association to encourage its delegate agencies to create extended-day programs. To make the delegates' job easier, **City of Phoenix Head Start** has developed an *Extended Day Child Care Program Implementation Guide* that provides essential information on how to establish extended-day programs that operate efficiently and achieve financial self-sufficiency within one year. Now in its second printing, the guide has been distributed both to Head Start agencies and other organizations and agencies interested in developing extended-day programs.

This year, **City of Phoenix Head Start** is testing the placement of Head Start programs in child care centers by opening three directly operated programs. One of its delegate agencies will open Head Start programs in three child care centers as well.

Three-Shift Programs in San Diego

Neighborhood House Association Head Start in San Diego also has taken parents' needs for extended-day and odd-hour care very seriously, offering families care that covers three work shifts Monday through Saturday. Director Barbara Fielding says:

> Our goal in San Diego is to provide seamless and wraparound services based on the needs, resources, and aspirations of the family. We have been watching the trend of families needing full-day and critical hours care for several years, and we have been planning to become a full-year, full-day program for the past three years. Then TANF kicked in, and it's good that we were prepared because about 70 percent of our Head Start families are TANF families.

The agency has used Head Start expansion funds to keep all 60 of its Head Start sites open from 5 a.m. until 8 p.m. for community and parent activities plus child care. Starting in March 1998, 12 sites – including one in a low-income apartment complex – are open year-round from 5 a.m. until at least 11:30 p.m. Some centers are now open until midnight.

In addition, **Neighborhood House Association Head Start** is collaborating with the San Diego Community College District to help meet both the child development needs and the employment development needs of families. The child development centers at the two college campuses were providing only day services when a community needs assessment showed that families needed late afternoon and evening child care at those sites as well. Therefore, Head Start began collaborating to provide care during that time period. Now, Head Start parents can take vocational or academic courses in the late afternoon or evening while their children participate in a Head Start program on the same campus. The Head Start programs are open from 4 p.m. until 10 p.m. on weekdays and on Saturdays, to accommodate parents' class and work schedules.

At the same time, the agency is collaborating with about 90 licensed family child care home providers in the county to offer up to 10 hours of high-quality, full-day, full-year child care to approximately 300 children and their families. The network of providers offers the Head Start parent the opportunity to select a caregiver in her community with whom to schedule extended care hours. Together, as of March, the Head Start centers, the community college collaboration, and the family child care homes provide good-quality, full-day services for more than 1,300 children, says Fielding.

Conclusion

Helping families move from welfare to work is a complex task, but as this report clearly shows, Head Start programs across the country are doing a remarkable job of meeting the challenge. The unique trust that Head Start inspires in parents means that these programs are ideal settings in which to help parents understand the implications of the new welfare law for them and their children and move forward to meet its requirements, based on their own individual needs and experiences. In addition, Head Start programs' strong ties to their communities mean they are well positioned to identify local resources and provide leadership in creating new partnerships to help the families they serve make a successful transition to the world of work.

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How Head Start Encourages Success:

In the words of program providers and parents

We have created a safe environment where risk-taking and making mistakes are expected as natural parts of the process.

We spend a lot of time on attitude, on how to keep a job.

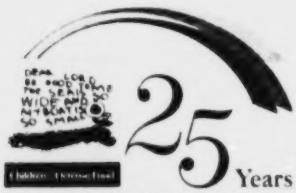
After the first internship, we bring them back into the classroom and talk about what happened. . . They are better workers when they get out there.

We've had good results in Head Start when former parents become staff members. . . It's like neighbors helping neighbors.

They made me speak in front of everybody in the class. . . I found out I could do it.

We're breaking down barriers and working together with other agencies very effectively.

Our goal . . . is to provide seamless and wraparound services based on the needs, resources, and aspirations of the family.



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